

**THE HOME
ECONOMICS
MOVEMENT, PART I**

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The Home Economics Movement, Part I by Isabel Bevier & Susannah Usher

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ISABEL BEVIER & SUSANNAH USHER

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THE HOME ECONOMICS MOVEMENT

PART I

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INTRODUCTION

THE work incumbent upon the organization and development of a department of Home Economics in a state university has sent us again and again to the histories of education for suggestions, inspiration, and guiding principles. The difficulty in finding such data, scattered as it is through the history of education, and the urgent need for it have impelled us to this attempt to collect and interpret, as well as we can, the facts bearing on the origin, development, and present status of Home Economics.

The authors realize that it is a difficult task to trace beginnings, to attempt to separate essentials from non-essentials, or to essay the office of interpreter. Recognizing these difficulties and the imperfection of this work, this brief survey of the situation is sent out to our fellow-workers in the same line with the request that mistakes and omissions be reported in order that the final effort, of which this is only a beginning, may more worthily represent the cause for which it stands.

GENERAL SURVEY

It is evident that the study of any educational movement implies a consideration of the political, social, and industrial conditions of the same period. So a study of Home Economics means a survey of education in general, together with a consideration of the social, industrial, and

economic changes which the years have wrought and their effect, particularly upon the status of woman.

A survey of education in the colonies in their beginnings shows that the colonists were never indifferent to the interests of education. Naturally other needs had to be considered first, but some statement is usually found in the early history which indicates that some kind of provision had been made for education. As early as 1616 the king¹ ordered the Bishop of London to collect money for a college to be founded in Virginia. Two years later when the money had been secured the following instructions were given to Governor Yardley:

"Whereas by a special grant and license from His Majesty, a general contribution hath been made for building and planting a college for the training up of the children of those infidels in true religion, moral virtue, and civility, and for other godliness, we do, therefore, according to a former grant and order, hereby ratify, confirm, and ordain that a convenient place be chosen and set out for the planting of a university at the said Henrico in time to come, and that in the meantime preparation be made for the building of the said college for the children of the infidels according to such instructions as we shall deliver. And we will ordain that ten thousand acres, partly of the lands they impaled and partly of the land within the territory of the said Henrico, be allotted and set out for the endowing of the said university and college with convenient possessions."

When we remember that these pupils were children and savages it is easy to understand that the term university has long been perverted. The same interest

¹ *History of Education in the United States*, Dexter, p. 2.

regarding education is shown in the history of the Dutch colonies by the following quotation :

"The patroons and the colonists shall, in particular, endeavor to find out ways and means whereby they may support a minister and schoolmaster,¹ that thus the service of God and zeal for religion may not grow cool and be neglected among them, and they shall, for the first, procure a comforter of the sick there."

Dexter says :² "Whereas the colonists in Virginia seem to have been actuated by the missionary spirit in the establishment of schools principally for Indians and orphans, and the Puritans in New England recognized at first only a need for higher education for the maintenance of a learned clergy, the Dutch began at the bottom, with their own children. In the matter of popular education they were leaders."

The New England colonies have played a most important part in the development of education. The New England colonists came from homes of refinement and education, and counted among their dearest privileges those of education and religion. Boston Latin School, founded in 1635, followed by Harvard College in 1637, are testimonials of their efforts in behalf of education. The records of the Connecticut colonies show that they were not behind Boston in their educational efforts. Indeed Ezekiel Cheever, whose name is associated with the Boston Latin School, was the first teacher of the school founded in New Haven in 1641.

Hinsdale says :³ "No state has a more honorable educational record, taken altogether, than Connecticut. No

¹ History of Education in the United States, Dexter, p. 13.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.